

to help close the "digital divide" is by providing significantly discounted telecommunications services for schools and libraries. This initiative is critically important because it guarantees affordable telecommunications access to all schools—public and private.

Curiously, in spite of the great benefits it would bring to communities around the country, the E-Rate has faced a number of serious challenges. This offers a good example of how even the best ideas can get sidetracked or derailed by powerful special interests. Let me tell you what happened.

Two years ago, after months of public hearings and with bipartisan support, Congress passed, and the FCC implemented, the Telecommunications Act of 1996. This law deregulated the industry and provided telecommunications companies with broad new opportunities for growth.

Linked to this opportunity was a responsibility to continue Universal Service—a 60-year old program that has provided affordable telephone services to some rural communities and other areas with unusually high telephone costs. The Congress also expanded this critical program to provide schools and libraries with more affordable telecommunications services through what is referred to as the E-rate. It was a win-win situation.

In exchange for their continued support of Universal Service, the long distance telephone carriers were given significant reductions in their costs through reduced access fees. Unfortunately, after the plan was enacted, some of the long distance companies sought to change the way it was funded, jeopardizing the E-rate. And some members of Congress have sought short term political gain by trying to pull the plug on the program.

The long distance companies added a surcharge to phone bills purportedly to recover the cost of Universal Service. But we argue that they already had been reimbursed through the reduced access fees.

They also failed to distinguish between all Universal Service charges and the E-Rate. One large long distance company put a 95 cent surcharge on telephone bills. But only 19 cents of that was for the school and library program—which amounted to less than a penny a day. I can think of no more worthwhile investment for our children.

Now, I am pleased to say that grass roots groups and student organizations have fought diligently for this effort. As a result, we were able to save the E-rate, but attacks on it continue. If the E-rate is taken away or reduced any further, as a recent report by the National School Boards Association clearly demonstrates, students in schools and people in libraries across the country will be left high and dry. That is wrong and people need to speak out about it.

Let me tell you in no uncertain terms—President Clinton, Vice President Gore, and I will continue to fight any efforts to dismantle the e-rate and widen the digital divide.

What good is it to be the richest nation in the world—with the greatest technological resources in the world—if the ability to benefit from technology is dependent on whether a student goes to a particular school?

There are many who criticize the use of technology in our schools. The irony is that those who belittle this use of technology are those who already have access to computers and the preparation to participate fully in today's Information Age.

This debate has never been about technology. It has been about what our children have the opportunity to do. It's about much more than just giving a young person a computer or connecting that person to the Inter-

net. It's about connecting students to a whole new world of learning resources and offering the mind the opportunity to expand and take on a new and challenging future.

As I'm sure many of you already know, the web is a wondrous resource for those of you thinking about college. A recent survey of college-bound high school seniors found that 78% had used college web sites during their hunt for campus information—up from 4% just two years earlier.

The Department of Education's own web site provides publications such as "Getting Ready for College Early," the "Student Guide to Financial Aid" and "Funding your Education." You can even get and fill out your financial aid forms for college (FAFSA) via the web.

I am delighted to announce that today we are unveiling our "Think College Early" web site. This new site ([www.ed.gov/thinkcollege](http://www.ed.gov/thinkcollege)) will provide middle school students, parents, and teachers critical information they need to know to begin to get prepared for college. If parents are not computer literate, I would encourage students to download a copy of the Department's own "Parents Guide to the Internet"—so that parents and children can discuss and research these issues together.

We also need to improve opportunities for teachers to use technology—so that it is just as easy as it is for most teachers to use a chalkboard today. The best high tech learning equipment is of little value if a teacher doesn't know how to use it effectively in the classroom. Colleges of education need to incorporate technology resources and training into their curriculum. Some already use this, most do not, and all of them should.

This Administration has proposed a number of initiatives designed to strengthen teacher training, with an emphasis on application of technology in the classroom. One such effort would provide \$75 million to help ensure that all new teachers entering the workforce can integrate technology effectively in the curriculum.

This is particularly important, given the expected need over the next 10 years for more than two million new teachers. And I hope when the full House of Representatives takes up this issue, it will reverse the decision of the House Appropriations Committee, which refused to fund this important initiative.

Now before I close, I want to emphasize another very important point. While we know that technology makes a very real difference in helping teaching and learning, it is not—I repeat—it is not a panacea for fixing all of the challenges that our schools face. It is a not a substitute for solid teaching and learning, but an opportunity to enhance and build upon it.

The benefits of technology in schools can only be achieved by entire communities coming together. And this Administration is fighting to make the investment to improve education and our schools. We want to give every community more resources—through efforts to raise standards, lower class size, strengthen teaching, improve reading, build and modernize schools, and expand after-school programs. And technology is an important part of this.

The majority in Congress has so far been only negative and opposed full investment in these initiatives. But I hope with the new school year they will get the education spirit. Quite simply, we need to work together—in our local communities and with national leadership and assistance—to make sure that all schools have the hardware, software, wiring, and teacher training they need and every child has the opportunity to click into the educational promise of technology.

We have it in our power to make sure that this tool for learning not only does not exac-

erbate the divide between rich and poor—but also works to close it.

Most parents and educators understand the value of technology even if they don't understand the technology itself. It is a reflection of Americans' overall deep feeling about the promise and the power of education—its enormous capacity to open doors, create opportunities and help make people better citizens. Americans understand that without education, we can have neither excellence nor equity. I hope Congress will hear the voices of America.

As President Clinton said recently, "We can extend opportunity to all Americans—or leave many behind. We can erase lines of inequity—or etch them indelibly. We can accelerate the most powerful engine of growth and prosperity the world has ever known—or allow that engine to stall."

I say it is time we take on the challenge and commit ourselves to ending the digital divide. I challenge this nation to work to ensure that every young person in America has the opportunity to sign on to the Internet, to conduct research, look for information about colleges, and just express a natural curiosity and strengthen a love for learning.

What we can not do is let this opportunity pass us by. We must fulfill the promise of this new age of education and information.●

#### TRIBUTE TO CHRISTINE JACOBS

● Mr. CLELAND. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the many accomplishments of Christine Jacobs of Norcross, Georgia. Chris is the President, CEO and Chairman of the Board of Theragenics Corporation which markets, sells and distributes the FDA-licensed medical device TheraSeed for treating cancer.

She has had many remarkable accomplishments during her career, but today I would like to call attention to yet another important milestone. On August 6, 1998 Chris will switch Theragenics from the NASDAQ exchange, which the company has been trading on publicly since 1986, to the New York Stock Exchange. Chris will become the first female CEO to enroll a company on the New York Stock Exchange. She will also be ringing the bell to open the exchange that morning.

Chris Jacobs is truly a remarkable and successful business-savvy member of the Georgia business community. She also dedicates time to civic and medical organizations in Georgia including the Georgia Bio-Medical Partnership, the Board of Councilors of the Carter Center, the State's Small Business Taskforce and the Georgia Chamber of Commerce.

Chris Jacobs possesses the tenacity and vision that has changed the world as we have known it and paved the road to the next millennium in regard to medical treatment. I ask my colleagues in the Senate to join me in honoring the innumerable achievements of Chris Jacobs and her work at Theragenics, and wish her luck and much success on the New York Stock Exchange. She proves that if we can perceive it we can achieve it—Chris will continue to rewrite history and achieve unending successes.●